

car, covered up the license plate with his shirt so that his tags would not be identified, and sped away. The owner of the Floridian restaurant is offering a \$5,000 reward for any information leading to the capture of this suspect. Brunner was treated at a local hospital for severe bruising around his eyes.

I believe that the Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. Federal laws intended to protect individuals from heinous and violent crimes motivated by hate are woefully inadequate. This legislation would better equip the Government to fulfill its most important obligation by protecting new groups of people as well as better protecting citizens already covered under deficient laws. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

RECIDIVISM REDUCTION AND SECOND CHANCE ACT OF 2007

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I rise today to thank my colleagues for passing yesterday by unanimous consent the Recidivism Reduction and Second Chance Act of 2007, which I introduced in March of last year. I am delighted that my colleagues, Senators SPECTER, BROWNBACK, and LEAHY, and I were able to bring Democrats and Republicans together to support this very important piece of legislation.

The bill aims to reduce the rate of recidivism by improving the transition of offenders from prison back into the community. Preventing recidivism is not only the right thing to do, it makes our communities safer and it saves us money.

Today, we have over 2 million individuals in our Federal and State prisons and millions more in local jails. Our Federal and State prisons will release nearly 650,000 of these offenders back into our communities this year. A staggering two-thirds of released State prisoners will be rearrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor within 3 years of release.

It is not difficult to see why. These ex-offenders face a number of difficult challenges upon release. The unemployment rate among former inmates is as high as 60 percent; 15 to 27 percent of prisoners expect to go to homeless shelters upon release; and 57 percent of Federal and 70 percent of State inmates used drugs regularly before prison. This addiction and dependency often continues during incarceration.

Unless we address these problems, these individuals will commit hundreds of thousands of serious crimes after their release, and our communities will bear the human and economic cost. If we are going to reduce recidivism and crime, we simply have to make concerted, common-sense efforts now to help ex-offenders successfully reenter and reintegrate into their communities.

The Recidivism Reduction and Second Chance Act of 2007 confronts head-

on the dire situation of prisoners reentering our communities with insufficient monitoring, little or no job skills, inadequate drug treatment, insufficient housing, lack of basic physical and mental health services, and deficient basic life skills. Through commonsense and cost-effective measures, the bill offers a second chance for ex-offenders, and the children and families that depend on them, and it strengthens our communities and ensures safe neighborhoods.

The Second Chance Act provides grants for the development and implementation of comprehensive substance abuse treatment programs, academic and vocational education programs, housing and job counseling programs, and mentoring for offenders who are approaching release and who have been released. To ensure accountability, the bill requires grantees to establish performance goals and benchmarks and report the results to Congress.

The bill authorizes \$324 million over 2 years in competitive grant funding. These funds represent an investment in our future and an acknowledgement of the problem we face. We must remember that the average cost of incarcerating each prisoner exceeds \$20,000 per year, with expenditures on corrections alone having increased from \$9 billion in 1982 to \$60 billion in 2002. That is more than a 6-fold increase, and the costs keep going up.

A relatively modest investment in offender reentry efforts today is far more cost-effective than the alternative—building more prisons for these ex-offenders to return to if they can't reenter their communities and are convicted of further crimes. An ounce of prevention, as the saying goes, is worth a pound of cure.

I am proud today to witness the passage of the Recidivism Reduction and Second Chance Act, a bill that will transform offender reentry policy in this country. The safety of our neighbors, our children, and our communities depends on it. I urge the President to quickly sign this bill into law.

I would particularly like to thank Nancy Libin on my staff, Lisa Owings on Senator SPECTER's staff, LaRochelle Young on Senator BROWNBACK's staff, and Noah Bookbinder on Senator LEAHY's staff, all of whom worked tirelessly to get this bill passed.

PASSAGE OF THE SECOND CHANCE ACT

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I seek recognition to comment on the passage of the Second Chance Act. I thank my colleagues Senators BROWNBACK, BIDEN, and LEAHY, who are original cosponsors of this bill, for their tireless advocacy for this long-needed legislation and my other colleagues for their support of the bill, which passed the Senate by unanimous consent.

Each year, as many as 700,000 offenders will be released from prison or jail. Unfortunately, approximately two-

thirds of those individuals will be rearrested within 3 years of their release. The consequences of such high recidivism rates are disastrous for our Nation. Each year, approximately 1.5 million Americans become victims of violent crime. The total pecuniary and non-pecuniary cost of crime has been estimated to be as much as \$2 trillion annually—or 17 percent of the gross domestic product. Much of this cost comes directly out of taxpayers' pockets—the cost of keeping a prisoner in jail is as high as \$30,000 per year. The cumulative cost to the Federal Government is approximately \$60 billion annually. High crime and recidivism rates have also proven cyclical in nature: with 2.3 million of offenders in prison and jail, nearly 2 million American children spend part of the year without their parent—a factor known to put those children at risk of later committing crimes themselves.

The likelihood that a prisoner will leave prison or jail, return to their family and community, obtain a job, and lead a productive and law-abiding life increases dramatically with increasing levels of education, job training, and substance abuse treatment. Yet, a few basic statistics demonstrate just how ill-equipped the 650,000 prisoners who will return to our neighborhoods and communities are to accomplish these basic objectives. Seventy percent of ex-offenders operate at the lowest levels of literacy. The majority struggle with drug and alcohol addiction—as many as 70 percent of prisoners were regular drug users prior to being convicted. Nearly 60 percent of ex-offenders will be unemployed a year after they are released from prison.

The Second Chance Act will help break this dangerous cycle of recidivism. The bill will encourage realistic rehabilitation by providing prisoners who seek to turn their lives around with the education, literacy training, job training, employment assistance and substance abuse treatment they need to do so. The Second Chance Act will also enhance the proven-effective prison mentoring programs through which church members and community members provide individualized mentoring to prisoners who want to turn their lives around. The Second Chance Act draws on the experiences of many governmental, community, and non-profit organizations that are operating successful reentry programs around the country. For example, Pennsylvania's Community Orientation and Reintegration project, the Boston Reentry Initiative, and the Kansas Reentry Program have shepherded the way toward achieving lasting reductions in recidivism rates through innovative approaches to job training and education, family reunification, and public safety.

The Second Chance Act that will be signed by the President represents the tireless efforts of a tremendous bipartisan coalition from both houses of Congress. I am particularly thankful for the leadership of Senator